

## Text Analysis of Informality Elements in L1 and L2 M.A. Theses Writers

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### **Abstract:**

This research paper delves into the intriguing realm of informality elements within the academic writing of L1 and L2 M.A. theses. In academic landscape, where native English language writers and non-native English language writers contribute significantly to the multicultural academic community, understanding the nuances of informality in their written discourse is imperative. This study aims to scrutinize the presence and patterns of informal language features, such as anaphoric pronouns, contractions, and personal pronouns, in the academic writing of advanced academic writers. To achieve this goal, ten L1 M.A theses and ten L2 M.A. theses are selected randomly from various universities, produced by advanced academic writers. The last chapter of these texts are meticulously analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. This study follows Chang and Swales' (1999) model of classifications of the informal features. The findings reveal a complex interplay of informality elements in both L1 and L2 texts, shedding light on the factors influencing their choices, including the learners' cultural backgrounds, English language proficiency levels, and prior exposure to formal academic convention. It also discusses the pedagogical implications of these findings, offering insights into how educators can effectively guide learners in striking the delicate balance between formal and informal language in academic writing.

**Keywords: informality Elements, Academic Writing, L1 M.A. Theses, L2 M.A. Theses.**

التحليل النصي للعناصر اللغوية الغير رسمية في أطروحات الماجستير للناطقين باللغة الإنكليزية

كلغة أم والمتعلمين لها كلغة اجنبية

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### ملخص البحث:

تتناول هذه الدراسة استخدام العناصر غير الرسمية في الكتابة الأكاديمية في أطروحات الماجستير باللغة الأم (L1) واللغة الثانية (L2). يهدف هذا البحث إلى فحص وجود وأنماط سمات اللغة غير الرسمية، مثل الضمائر التي لم يتم التعامل معها بشكل منفصل، والاختصارات، والضمائر الشخصية، في الكتابة الأكاديمية للباحثين ذوي المستوى المتقدم في اللغة. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، تم اختيار عشرة أطروحات ماجستير باللغة الأم (L1) وعشرة أطروحات ماجستير باللغة الثانية (L2) بشكل عشوائي من مختلف الجامعات، والتي تم إنتاجها من قبل الكتاب ذوي المستوى المتقدم. تم تحليل الفصل الأخير من هذه النصوص بدقة باستخدام أساليب كمية ونوعية. استخدمت هذه الدراسة نموذج تصنيف عناصر اللغة غير الرسمية الذي قدمه Chang وSwales (1999). تُظهر النتائج تشابكاً معقداً لعناصر اللغة غير الرسمية في النصوص باللغتين L1 وL2، مسلطة الضوء على العوامل التي تؤثر في اختياراتهم، بما في ذلك خلفيات الطلاب الثقافية، ومستويات إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية، والتعرض السابق للتقاليد الأكاديمية الرسمية. وأشار البحث أيضاً إلى الآثار التربوية لهذه النتائج، مقدماً رؤية حول كيفية توجيه المربين بفعالية للطلاب في إيجاد التوازن الدقيق بين اللغة الرسمية وغير الرسمية في الكتابة الأكاديمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتابة الأكاديمية، اطاريح الماجستير المكتوبة من قبل الناطقين باللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أم، اطاريح الماجستير المكتوبة من قبل الناطقين باللغة الإنكليزية كلغة اجنبية، العناصر اللغوية الغير رسمية.

## **1. Statement of the Problem**

In the context of academic writing by advanced writers, the presence of informality elements poses a significant challenge. These informality elements, including anaphoric pronouns, split infinitives, sentence initial conjunctions, sentence final preposition, listing expressions, second person pronouns, contractions, direct questions, and exclamations, , have been observed in various instances, potentially impacting the quality and effectiveness of their academic discourse. However, there exists a critical gap in the literature concerning a text analysis of these informality elements within the academic writing of advanced writers presented by L1 M.A. theses and L2 M.A. theses.

## **2. Research Questions**

The current study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How are informal elements distributed and employed in the academic writing of L1 and L2 M.A. theses?
2. Do the applications of informal elements differ between L1 M.A. theses and L2 M.A. theses?

## **3. Introduction**

Academic writing, as a crucial vehicle for the dissemination of knowledge and scholarly discourse, plays an indispensable role in higher education. Advanced academic texts, often characterized by their growing proficiency in English, embark on the challenging journey of mastering the norms and conventions of academic discourse. One of the noteworthy aspects of this endeavor is the nuanced use of informality elements in academic writing. Informality elements, including, for example, personal pronouns, contractions, and anaphoric pronouns, can be subtle yet pivotal in shaping the tone and register of academic texts.

The integration of informality elements in academic writing has attracted the attention of researchers, educators, and linguists alike due to its intricate interplay with language proficiency, sociocultural influences, and disciplinary expectations. Understanding how L1 and L2 writers employ informality elements in their academic writing is not only pivotal for effective teaching but also holds implications for the broader discourse on language acquisition and intercultural communication.

One crucial facet under scrutiny concerns the role of language proficiency in shaping the prevalence and usage of informality elements within the academic writing. This inquiry strives to ascertain the extent to which the proficiency level of these learners influences the distribution and incorporation of informality elements in their scholarly texts. It is posited that the proficiency level may exert significant influence over the usage of informality elements, thereby shaping the tone and formality of their academic discourse (Flowerdew, 1999; Hyland, 2002).

Moreover, the examination extends its purview to encompass the influence of sociocultural factors on the presence of informality elements in the academic writing of advanced EFL learners. These sociocultural factors encompass variables such as the learners' native language, prevailing cultural norms, and the breadth of their exposure to diverse linguistic environments. By considering these factors, this inquiry aims to elucidate how the cultural backdrop of native language and nonnative language writers may impact their proclivity to incorporate informality elements into their academic discourse. It is envisaged that learners from different cultural backgrounds may exhibit varying degrees of informality in their writing, reflecting the nuanced interplay between culture and language (Curry & Lillis, 2004; Hofstede, 2001).

Furthermore, this exploration delves into the realm of disciplinary variations, scrutinizing the influence of disciplinary expectations and conventions on the tolerance for informality elements within academic writing. A central inquiry pertains to the extent to which different academic disciplines impose varying standards of formality on the writing produced by advanced EFL learners. The study probes how these learners navigate the distinct disciplinary boundaries in their quest to meet the academic standards and expectations of their chosen fields (Hyland, 2004; Swales, 1990).

Finally, the investigation takes into consideration the influential role played by the educational context in shaping the awareness and utilization of informality elements among advanced EFL learners. This encompasses an examination of pedagogical approaches, curricular design, and the feedback mechanisms embedded within the educational milieu. By scrutinizing these aspects, the inquiry seeks to comprehend how the educational context molds the aptitude of advanced EFL learners to employ or eschew informality elements in their academic writing, thereby influencing their linguistic development (Bourdieu, 1977; Tribble, 1996).

Various studies have examined informal elements in academic writing, such as the use of first-person pronouns, imperatives, pronominal anaphoric references, contractions, and sentence-initial conjunctions (Flowerdew, 2001; Hyland, 2002; Harwood, 2005; Martínez, 2005; Mur dueñas, 2007; Lafuente, 2010; Wang & Wang, 2017; ). Some researchers have examined these features individually, while others have grouped them together to assess the overall level of informality (Chang & Swales, 1999; Hyland & Jiang, 2017). Informality in academic writing has been defined in various ways, including the presence of spoken language features (Barton, 1994).

#### **4. Theoretical Framework**

The utilization of informal elements in academic writing has remained a point of ongoing contention within the scholarly community. While some advocate for a more relaxed and approachable style of writing, others emphasize the crucial nature of upholding the conventional formal tone and established norms of academic discourse. It is argued that informal language, anecdotes, and relatable examples have the potential to render complex ideas more accessible to a broader audience, including individuals beyond the confines of academia. In his book "Genre Analysis," John Swales (1990) underscores the significance of taking into consideration the needs and expectations of the audience in academic writing. Informal elements can effectively serve this purpose. This infusion of informality can imbue academic writing with a humanizing quality, fostering a sense of connection between the author and the reader. Such an emotional connection can lead to enhanced reader involvement and comprehension. Helen Sword's work in "Stylish Academic Writing" further underscores the importance of engaging and establishing a connection with the audience through one's writing style. As articulated by Flowerdew (2001), the use of informal language and clarity can contribute to making academic texts more comprehensible, particularly for ESL (English as a Second Language) readers. This enhancement in clarity can facilitate their engagement with scholarly work, breaking down potential language barriers. Swales and Feak (2009) expand on this notion by explaining that the incorporation of informality elements by academic writers can contribute to fostering a more inclusive academic environment, ultimately dismantling language and cultural barriers that may otherwise impede understanding and participation.

Many scholars have thoroughly examined the potential drawbacks associated with incorporating informal elements into academic writing. Strunk and White (2000), for instance, conducted an investigation highlighting that the hallmark of academic writing lies in its capacity to convey intricate ideas with the utmost clarity and precision. The introduction of informal elements can jeopardize these crucial aspects. When authors employ informal language and colloquial expressions, they run the risk of introducing ambiguity, thereby making it challenging for readers to decipher the intended meaning. Furthermore, Hacker and Sommers (2010) emphasized that the use of informal elements may come at the cost of precision, rendering it difficult to accurately convey complex concepts. Swales and Feak (2012) put forth the argument that academic writing is held to rigorous standards, and the inclusion of informality elements can erode the credibility of scholarly work. The use of informal language may also diminish the author's perceived authority, potentially leading readers to question the rigor of the research. V. Tschudin (2019) aptly states that professionalism is a cornerstone of academic writing, and informality elements have the potential to undermine this professionalism. Such informality can



significantly impact how both the author and their work are perceived. Consequently, it becomes evident that the use of informal language and expressions may compromise the professional presentation of research, detracting from the overall seriousness and integrity of the work.

English Native language and English nonnative language writers often encounter challenges in achieving an appropriate level of formality in their academic writing. There are certain factors that influence the distribution and usage of informality elements in their academic writing, drawing upon linguistic theories, sociocultural perspectives, and educational contexts.

Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar posits that humans possess an innate linguistic competence, enabling them to acquire and utilize language (Chomsky, 1965). For all learners in native language and nonnative language, this competence is influenced by both their native language's structure and their proficiency in English. Learners with higher levels of proficiency are better positioned to discern nuances in formality distinctions, allowing them to judiciously incorporate informality elements into their writing.

Sociolinguistic theories, as advanced by Labov (1972) and Eckert (2005), highlight the inherent variability of language and individuals' ability to adapt their speech to diverse social contexts. Academic writers, shaped by their native sociolinguistic norms and English-language conventions, exhibit a dynamic interplay in their usage of informality elements, often influenced by their perception of the appropriate linguistic register within specific communication situations.

Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction (1977) highlights the significant role of the educational context in shaping language use. In the case of L1 and L2 M.A. theses, the pedagogical methods, curriculum design, and evaluation criteria employed within educational institutions play a pivotal role in cultivating their awareness of formality expectations and their capacity to employ or abstain from informality elements (Bourdieu, 1977).

Swales' concept of discourse communities (1990) illuminates the diversity of academic writing conventions across various disciplines. Academic writers often encounter varying expectations concerning the utilization of formality and informality elements contingent on the field of study, be it the sciences, humanities, or social sciences. As such, the disciplinary context significantly shapes the style and formality levels of their academic writing (Swales, 1990).

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (2001) posits that cultural values are instrumental in shaping communication styles. Native cultural norms concerning politeness, hierarchical structures, and directness deeply influence the choices academic texts producers make in regard to the integration of informality elements into their academic writing (Hofstede, 2001).

Moreover, Swales and Feak (2012: 14) point out that academic writers must ensure that their written communication adheres to the correct style. The style of a specific document should not only remain consistent but also align with the intended message and audience. Using a casual, conversational tone in a formal research report might be deemed overly simplistic, even if the content contains intricate ideas and data.

## **5. Review of Related Studies**

Research on the informality of academic writing has been a subject of investigation in various contexts, offering valuable insights into the influence of factors such as language proficiency, cultural influences, and disciplinary expectations on the utilization of informal elements within scholarly discourse.

Flowerdew's study (1999) scrutinizes academic writing produced by non-native English-speaking scholars in Hong Kong, focusing on the intricate interplay between language proficiency and cultural factors. This research underscores how the informality of academic writing is not only contingent upon language competence but also profoundly shaped by sociocultural dimensions.

Curry and Lillis (2004) delve into the intricate relationship between cultural influences and the use of informality elements within academic writing, particularly among multilingual scholars. This inquiry unveils the complex tension between the imperative to publish in English and the cultural predilections for formal expression, thereby illuminating the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon.

Hyland's work (2004), encapsulated in the book "Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing," contributes significantly to the understanding of disciplinary expectations in academic writing. It delineates how different academic disciplines exhibit varying levels of tolerance for informality elements, reflecting the nuanced interplay between disciplinary norms and linguistic expression.

Swales' seminal book on genre analysis (1990) offers valuable insights into the influence of genre and register on the incorporation of informality elements in academic writing. By exploring the disparities across academic disciplines and genres, this work underscores the importance of context-specific considerations in the analysis of informality elements.

Connor's research (1996) illuminates the realm of academic writing produced by English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners. It underscores how EFL learners' academic writing may inadvertently feature informality elements due to the influence of rhetorical and linguistic norms from their first language.

Tribble's comprehensive literature review (1996) examines the impact of academic writing instruction on mitigating informality in the writing of EFL learners. This review consolidates findings from various studies to underscore the significance of pedagogical approaches in shaping the formality of academic discourse among language learners.

Regarding the EFL context in Iraq, Al-Buainain (2015) conducted a comprehensive study investigating the intricate relationship between language proficiency and the incorporation of informal elements in the academic writing of Iraqi EFL students. This research offers valuable insights into how the proficiency levels of these learners influence both the presence and the strategic usage of informality elements in their scholarly discourse. The findings of this study shed light on the specific challenges faced by EFL learners in Iraq in navigating the complex terrain of academic writing.

Al-Momen's study (2019) extends the inquiry into the realm of Iraqi academic writing by examining how EFL university students adapt their writing style to align with the distinct disciplinary expectations and conventions that prevail across various academic fields. This research underscores the significance of disciplinary influences in shaping the academic writing style of Iraqi EFL learners, emphasizing the nuanced interplay between disciplinary norms and linguistic expression.

Al-Jubouri and Al-Kaisi's study (2020) investigate the role of English language instruction in Iraq and its impact on the awareness and utilization of informality elements in the academic writing of EFL learners. By examining the educational context and instructional methods, this research provides valuable insights into how language instruction shapes the linguistic choices made by advanced EFL learners in Iraq when it comes to informality elements within their academic writing.

The present study distinguishes itself from previous research by adopting Chang and Swales' (1999) model for classifying elements of informality. Additionally, it focuses on the examination and analysis of L1 and L2 M.A. theses authored by advanced writers. This research aligns with earlier studies in its utilization of a mixed research methodology, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

## **6. Research Methodology**

### **6.1 Sample**

The sample of the current study is ten L1 M.A theses and ten L2 M.A. theses are written by English native writers and nonnative English writers from different universities. The main field of these texts is applied linguistics. They are tackling different issues related to the main field which is applied linguistics for example English language teaching, pragmatics, stylistics, and phonology. They are selected according to their availability and accessibility. See Appendix (A) and Appendix (B).



## 6.2 Procedures

The researcher initiates the data collection process from various electronic websites, contingent upon their availability and accessibility. Subsequently, the gathered data is categorized into two primary groups: L1 Master of Arts (M.A.) theses and L2 Master of Arts (M.A.) The primary focus of this analysis centers on the last chapter within these textual documents. The last chapters have been selected because they could be a suitable area of discussion, suggestions, and concluding final remarks of the whole thesis. So, the writers in both L1 and L2 have the opportunities to insert their own ideas and opinions. This limitation arises due to the constraints of the present paper.

The next step in the research methodology involves the application of Chang and Swales' model (1999). This model is employed to discern and identify informality elements within the L1 and L2 texts. The process of identifying these informality features entails manual examination within their contextual surroundings. This approach is preferred as there is no necessity to employ complex statistical formulas. The utilization of percentages is deemed sufficient to elucidate the responses to the research questions.

## 6.3 Data Analysis

In order to answer the research questions of this study, the researcher presents the results of the informality elements on the L1 M.A theses and L2 M.A. theses produced by academic writers. The analysis is organized according to the informality elements identified in the last chapters of these texts. Chang and Swales (1999) identified ten elements of informality in academic writing. These elements are characteristics that distinguish informal academic writing from more formal styles. Here's a table with these elements along with examples:

**Table (1)**

**Chang and Swales' (1999) Model of Informality Elements in Written Text**

No. of Elements	Informality Element	Examples
1	First person pronouns (I and we)	"In this study, <b>we</b> investigated the effects of bilingualism on cognitive development."
2	Broad reference - anaphoric pronouns	"The results of the study revealed a significant correlation between language proficiency and cognitive skills. <b>This</b> suggests a strong relationship between the two variables."
3	Split infinitives	" <b>To</b> better <u>understand</u> the phenomenon, researchers decided to systematically investigate the data."
4	Beginning a sentence with conjunctions/conjunctive adverb	" <b>However</b> , it should be noted that this approach has its limitations."
5	Ending a sentence with a preposition	"The factors to be considered are difficult to control <b>for</b> ."
6	Run-on sentences and expressions	"The study covered various aspects of linguistic diversity, including dialectal variations, sociolinguistic factors, language contact, historical changes, phonological patterns, <u>etc.</u> "
7	Sentence fragments	" <b>Because of the previous research</b> . In this study."
8	Contractions	"The study <b>didn't</b> find a significant correlation between the two variables."
9	Direct questions	" <b>What are the implications of these findings for language acquisition?</b> "
10	Exclamations	"Remarkably, the results indicate a groundbreaking discovery in the field <b>!</b> "

*Text Analysis of Informality Elements in L1 and L2  
M.A. Theses Writers*

In order to answer the two research questions of the present study which read: 1. How are informal elements distributed and employed in the academic writing of L1 and L2 M.A. Theses? 2. Do the applications of informal elements differ between L1 M.A. theses and L2 M.A. Theses? The uses and the frequencies of the informality elements in L1 M.A. theses and L2 M.A. theses are manually calculated as it is shown in table (2) and (3) below:

**Table (2)**

**The Frequencies of Informality Elements in L1 M.A. Theses**

No. of M.A. Theses	Informality Elements										
	First person pronouns (I and we)	Broad reference - anaphoric pronouns	Split infinitives	Beginning a sentence with conjunctions /conjunctive adverb	Ending a sentence with a preposition	Run-on expressions sentences and	Sentence fragments	Contractions	Direct questions	Exclamations	Total
1	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
2	1	27	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	33
3	63	37	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	104
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	75	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	81
6	2	13	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
7	48	67	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	120
8	0	21	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	24
9	10	33	0	6	0	0	0	0	3	0	52
10	4	26	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	31
Total	128	302	0	33	0	0	0	0	6	0	469

**Table (3)**

**The Frequencies of Informality Elements in L2 M.A. Theses**

No. of L2 M.A. Theses	Informality Elements										
	First person pronouns (I and we)	Broad reference - anaphoric pronouns	Split infinitives	Beginning a sentence with conjunctions /conjunctive adverb	Ending a sentence with a preposition	Run-on expressions sentences and	Sentence fragments	Contractions	Direct questions	Exclamations	Total
1	0	27	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	28
2	0	21	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	2	29
3	0	9	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
4	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
5	4	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	18
6	1	37	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	42
7	0	4	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	8
8	0	28	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	32
9	1	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36
10	0	12	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
Total	6	186	0	15	0	3	0	2	8	3	223

Table (2) clearly presents the frequencies and usage of informality elements in the Master of Arts (M.A.) theses of native English speakers. The distribution of these informality elements can be categorized into three groups: overused, underused, and not used. Among the overused elements in L1 M.A. theses are personal pronouns and anaphoric pronouns. Personal pronouns are employed 128 times, constituting 27.29% of the total. Anaphoric pronouns, on the other hand, appear 302 times, representing 64.35%. The underuse of these elements in L1 M.A. theses is exemplified by the initiation of sentences with conjunctive adverbs like "however" and the use of direct questions. "However" is utilized 33 times, accounting for 7.04% of the instances, while direct questions are employed 6 times, comprising 1.28% of the total. The third category consists of elements that are not used in L1 M.A. theses. This category includes split infinitives, ending sentences with prepositions, run-on sentences and expressions, sentence fragments, contractions, and exclamations. The percentage of occurrence for all these elements is 0%.

On the other hand, Table ( 3) above provides an overview of the frequencies and utilization of informality elements in L2 M.A. theses, shedding light on how non-native English speakers incorporate these elements into their academic writing. These informality elements can be categorized into three groups: overused, underused, and unused. In the first group, only anaphoric pronouns stand out with a notably high percentage of 83.41%. These pronouns are employed 186 times. The second group comprises various informality elements, including personal pronouns, beginning sentences with the conjunctive adverb 'however,' run-on sentences and expressions, contractions, direct questions, and exclamations. Personal pronouns are used 6 times, making up 2.69% of the instances. Beginning sentences with the conjunctive adverb 'however' is observed 15 times, representing 6.73%. Run-on sentences and expressions occur 3 times, accounting for 1.35%. Contractions appear 2 times, constituting 0.90% of the total. Direct questions are utilized 8 times, making up 3.59%. Lastly, exclamations, an informality element underused by L2 academic writers, are found 3 times, with a percentage of 1.35%.

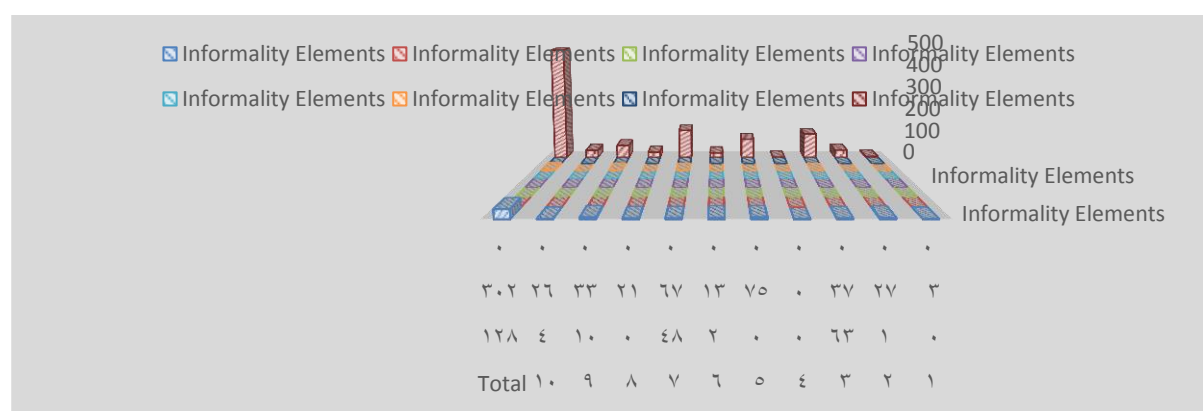


## 6.4 Discussion

In order to answer the research questions that are already stated in this study, interpretation and discussion of the results have been done. Regarding question No. 1 which reads: How are informal elements distributed and employed in the academic writing of L1 and L2 M.A. Theses? Table (2) and table (3) offer an inclusive examination of the frequencies and utilization of informality elements in Master of Arts (M.A.) theses written by both native English speakers (L1) and non-native English speakers (L2). These tables categorize the informality elements into three distinct groups: overused, underused, and unused, allowing us to discern notable patterns and differences in the usage of these elements among the two groups of writers. In Table 2, which focuses on native English speakers (L1), it is evident that personal pronouns and anaphoric pronouns emerge as the most frequently employed informality elements. Personal pronouns are utilized 128 times, constituting a significant 27.29% of the total informality element usage. Anaphoric pronouns, on the other hand, dominate the discourse with a staggering 64.35% usage rate, appearing 302 times. These findings suggest that L1 writers have a propensity for employing personal and anaphoric pronouns extensively in their academic writing, potentially to establish a more conversational tone or emphasize their own perspectives within the text. Conversely, Table (2) also highlights elements that are underused among L1 M.A. thesis writers. Specifically, initiating sentences with conjunctive adverbs like "however" and incorporating direct questions demonstrate notably lower usage. "However" is found only 33 times, making up 7.04% of the total, while direct questions are employed merely 6 times, representing a mere 1.28%. This underutilization of these informality elements suggests that L1 writers may prioritize maintaining a more formal and structured academic tone by avoiding sentence-initial conjunctive adverbs and direct interrogatives. The third category in Table 2 consists of elements that are entirely unused by L1 M.A. thesis writers. These include split infinitives, ending sentences with prepositions, run-on sentences and expressions, sentence fragments, contractions, and exclamations. The fact that these elements are absent from their writing indicates a strong adherence to conventional academic writing norms and a conscious avoidance of informal language features.

Shifting focus to Table (3), which investigates the writing of non-native English speakers (L2), a contrasting pattern emerges. Anaphoric pronouns take center stage in the informality element usage, with a strikingly high percentage of 83.41%, employed 186 times. This suggests that L2 writers lean heavily on anaphoric pronouns, possibly as a strategy to maintain cohesion and clarity in their writing, compensating for potential language proficiency gaps. In the second group in Table (3), various informality elements are explored, including personal pronouns, sentence-initial use of the conjunctive adverb 'however,' run-on sentences and expressions, contractions, direct questions, and exclamations. The usage of these elements, while present, is notably lower compared to L1 writers. For instance, personal pronouns appear only 6 times, representing 2.69%, indicating a preference

for less first-person engagement in their academic discourse. Additionally, starting sentences with 'however' is observed 15 times, comprising 6.73%, which is a more frequent usage than in L1 writing but still relatively restrained. Run-on sentences and expressions occur just 3 times (1.35%), contractions twice (0.90%), direct questions 8 times (3.59%), and exclamations 3 times (1.35%). These findings suggest that L2 writers, while incorporating some informality elements, generally maintain a more formal tone in their writing compared to their L1 counterparts. In both L1 and L2 writing, the informality elements that are entirely unused include split infinitives, ending sentences with prepositions, sentence fragments, and expressions. This common avoidance of these features underscores a shared commitment to adhering to conventional academic writing standards. The pie chart (1) below represents the values that are discussed above:

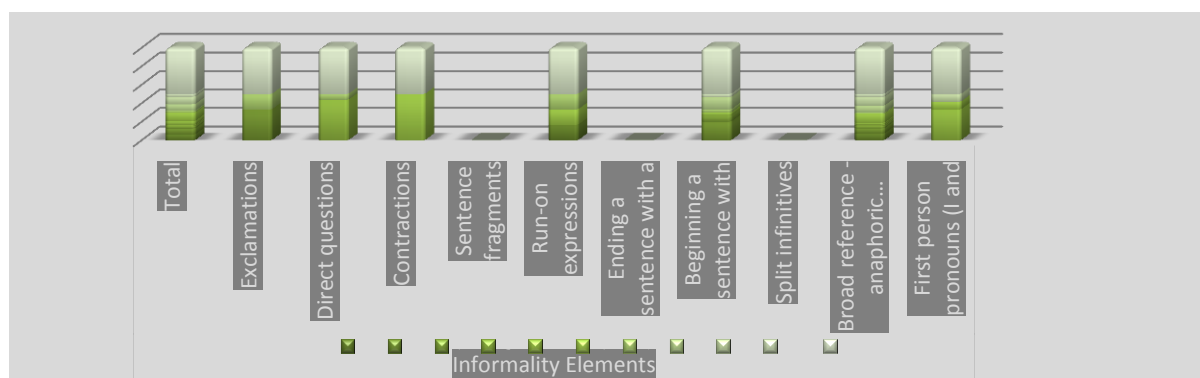


**Figure (1)**

### **The Frequencies of Informality Elements in L1 M.A. Theses**

Regarding question No. 2 of this study which reads: Do the applications of informal elements differ between L1 M.A. theses and L2 M.A. Theses? The comparative analysis of informality element usage in L1 and L2 M.A. theses reveals notable statistical differences between the two groups. Specifically, while L1 writers employ personal and anaphoric pronouns extensively, with personal pronouns constituting 27.29% and anaphoric pronouns comprising a substantial 64.35% of their informality element usage, L2 writers exhibit a strikingly different pattern with an overwhelming reliance on anaphoric pronouns, accounting for an impressive 83.41%. This stark contrast in anaphoric pronoun usage suggests that L2 writers employ these elements significantly more frequently than their L1 counterparts. Additionally, the relatively restrained usage of other informality elements, such as the initiation of sentences with the conjunctive adverb 'however,' run-on sentences, contractions, direct questions, and exclamations by L2 writers, further underscores the statistically significant differences between the two groups. These findings indicate that L2 writers strategically navigate the incorporation of informality elements in their academic writing, resulting in distinct usage patterns compared to L1 writers, which may stem from considerations related to language proficiency and adherence to academic norms.

In conclusion, the analysis of informality element usage in L1 and L2 M.A. theses highlights distinct patterns and preferences in academic writing. L1 writers tend to employ personal and anaphoric pronouns extensively while avoiding certain informality elements altogether. In contrast, L2 writers utilize anaphoric pronouns prominently and exhibit more restrained usage of other informality elements, reflecting their efforts to strike a balance between formality and clarity in their non-native English academic writing. These findings underscore the importance of understanding the nuanced interplay between informality and formality in academic writing, especially in the context of language proficiency and academic discourse. Pie chart (2) below explains the values that are discussed above:



**Figure (2)**

### **The Frequencies of Informality Elements in L2 M.A. Theses**

## **7. Conclusion**

This study endeavors to conduct a text analysis of informality elements used by both L1 and L2 academic writers. Traditionally, written language has been associated with formal language usage and structure, while spoken language tends to reflect a more informal form of communication. However, recent scholarly observations suggest that academic writing has seen a gradual shift towards incorporating informality elements. This shift may be attributed to stylistic choices made by writers who aim to establish a closer connection with their readers. One of the key findings of this study is the unexpected observation that L1 writers tend to employ informality elements more frequently than L2 writers. This is surprising considering that L1 writers typically possess greater linguistic proficiency in English. It appears that L2 writers, on the other hand, adhere more closely to the formal linguistic structures and patterns of the language, likely as a strategy to avoid both lexical and grammatical ambiguities and to ensure the cohesion and coherence of their writing. So linguistic proficiency, sociolinguistic factors, disciplinary variations, and educational context that are already mentioned have to be taken in consideration in studying informality elements in academic writing. These study results offer valuable insights for the teaching context, instructors, and learners, emphasizing the importance of understanding how informality elements are used and providing guidance on when, where, why, and how to employ such linguistic characteristics effectively in academic writing.

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**Appendix (A)**

**L1 M.A. Theses**

1. Shelley, Angela, "Dynamic Written Corrective Feedback: Achieving Manageability" (2014). All Theses and Dissertations. 4109. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/4109>
2. Company, Maria Teresa, "Error Frequencies Among ESL Writers: A Resource Guide" (2012). All Theses and Dissertations. 3420. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/3420>
3. Carreno Galdame, Sofia Laura, "A Motivational, Online Guide to Help English Language Learners with the Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of their Individual Pronunciation Improvement Plans" (2015). All Theses and Dissertations. 5659. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/5659>
4. Whetten, Darcy L., "Curriculum Development for the Novice Developer" (2013). All Theses and Dissertations. 4166. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/4166>
5. Hart, Judson Mc Kay, "Comparing the Effects of Two Forms of Dynamic Corrective Feedback On Four Characteristics of English Language Learner Writing" (2011). All Theses and Dissertations. 2785. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/2785>
6. Hedges, Stephanie Nicole, "A Latent Class Analysis of American English Dialects" (2017). All Theses and Dissertations. 6480. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/6480>.
7. De Paula, Sony Nicole, "Increasing multimedia literacy in composition for multilingual writers: a case study of art analysis" (2016). EWU Masters Thesis Collection. 392. <http://dc.ewu.edu/theses/392>
8. Yang, Gysuk, "Grammatical Features of Structural Elaboration and Compression Common in Advanced ESL Academic Writing" (2015). All Theses and Dissertations. 5286. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/5286>.
9. Smith, Rachel Tui, "A Qualitative Analysis of the English Language Teaching Practices of Latter-day Saint Missionaries" (2015). All Theses and Dissertations. 6174. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/6174>.
10. Aitken, Meghan Elizabeth, "A Study of First Language Background and Second Language Order of Acquisition" (2011). All Theses and Dissertations. 2674. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/2674>.

**Appendix (B)**  
**L2 M.A. Theses**

1. A LINGUISTIC STUDY OF TRANSITIVITY SYSTEM IN SELECTED SHORT STORIES
2. Flouting of Grice's Conversational Maxims by Women in Some Selected Plays: A Pragmatic Study.
3. The Use of Deception in Selected Literary Texts: A Comparative Pragmatic Study.
4. A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF HEDGING IN SELECTED PUBLISHED INTERVIEWS.
5. Alshaar, Basma E., "Attitudes and motivation of second language learners in Kuwait" (1997). Retrospective Theses and Dissertations. 277. <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd/277>.
6. The Influence of Gradating and the Use of Audio-visual aids on the Development of Writing Skill among Fifth Grade EFL Students.
7. Speech Acts in Imperative Sentences Used in the Holy Quran: The Case of Both the Cow and Joseph Chapters.
8. The Effectiveness of Utilizing Interactive Task-based Activities to Teach English Writing in Virtual Classes.
9. The Impact of Textbooks Collocational Tasks on the EFL Arab Learners' Retention and Use of English Collocational Forms.
10. The Effectiveness of Using Children's Songs in Developing Elementary Graders' English Vocabulary and Pronunciation in Jerusalem.